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TO: ARA - Ambassador Todman
THROUGH: ARA - Ambassador Stedman
FROM: ARA/ECA - Robert W. Zimmermann
SUBJECT: Your Meeting with the American Jewish Committee - Thursday, September 1 - 5:00 pm.

Four representatives of the American Jewish Committee will meet with you Thursday, September 1 at 5:00 pm. Those attending will be Richard Maas, President of the AJC, Bertram Gold, Executive Vice President, David Geller, Director of Latin American Affairs, and Jacobo Kovadloff, who ran the AJC office in Buenos Aires.

The discussion will center around Geller's recent trip to Argentina and the growing concern of the Argentine Jewish community that anti-Semitism is increasing within the GOA. Geller told us that the AJC is especially distressed by the Reznizky kidnapping (the son of leader of the Argentine Jewish community was kidnapped and only released after his father had interceded with President Videla) and the Timerman case (Timerman told Congressman Gilman that he had been questioned about an international Jewish conspiracy). Notwithstanding GOA assurances that religious persecution will not be tolerated, the AJC is worried.

I have attached a cable on the Gilman-Timerman conversation to illustrate why this AJC nervousness may be well justified.

Jim Bumpus and I would like to sit in on the meeting if you have no objections.

Attachment: As stated.

Drafted:ARA/ECA:JNBumpus:jc

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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

Changes

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Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1935~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6326

ENDS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2, AND 4
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER SEES JACOBO TIMERMANN;
CONGRESSMAN GILMAN ALSO PERMITTED INTERVIEW WITH TIMERMANN

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6173; BUENOS AIRES 6137

1. SUMMARY. CONGRESSMAN GILMAN'S RECENT MEETING WITH
TIMERMAN IS SUMMARIZED BELOW. THERE IS ALSO CONTAINED
A SUMMARY OF AN ALLEGED CONFESSION MADE BY TIMERMAN
DURING HIS CAPTIVITY. UNDER GROUND RULES ESTABLISHED
BY THE GOA, MR. GILMAN AGREED NOT TO GIVE ANY PUBLICITY
TO HIS MEETING. THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED IN THIS MESSAGE WOULD PLACE TIMERMAN IN
IMMEDIATE JEOPARDY AND COULD ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECT
US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.2. DURING THE VISIT OF CODEL YATRON TO BUENOS AIRES,
AUGUST 17-20, REPRESENTATIVE BENJAMIN GILMAN ASKED
FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS FOR PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW
JACOBO TIMERMANN, THE PUBLISHER OF "LA OPINION" UNTIL
HIS ARREST LAST APRIL IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER
INVESTIGATION. UNTIL NOW THE ONLY INDIVIDUALS ALLOWED TO
VISIT TIMERMAN HAVE BEEN CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS AND HIS RABBI
(WHO IS A UNITED STATES CITIZEN). WITHIN 24 HOURS OF
MR. GILMAN'S REQUEST, THE FOREIGN MINISTER OBTAINED A
GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PERMIT A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW
WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE EVENING OF AUGUST 19 IN
GOVERNMENT HOUSE. MR. GILMAN INTERVIEWED TIMERMAN IN
THE PRESENCE OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL AND AN EMBOFF.
AS A PRECONDITION FOR THE INTERVIEW, MR. GILMAN AGREED TO
GROUND RULES LAID DOWN BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT HE
WOULD NOT PUBLICIZE THE MEETING OR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE
CONVERSATION. ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, HOWEVER, THE
CONGRESSMAN WAS AUTHORIZED TO INFORM "HIS COLLEAGUES,"
WHICH LATER WAS DEFINED TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE
BELIEVED THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA WAS AWARE OF THE DECISION
TO PERMIT THE INTERVIEW, BUT IT WAS BEING HELD CLOSELY
WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT.3. TIMERMAN WALKED UNMANCUFFED AND ALONE INTO
A ROOM WHERE HIS VISITORS WERE WAITING. HE CONVERSED WITH
THE CONGRESSMAN IN ENGLISH. HE WAS DRESSED IN CASUAL
STREET CLOTHES AND AN OLD SPORT JACKET WHICH APPEARED
TO BE HIS OWN. HIS MANNER WAS SEDATED, BUT HE APPEARED TO
BE REMARKABLY IN CONTROL OF HIS MENTAL FACULTIES. IN
FACT, HE DEMONSTRATED CONSIDERABLE ACUITY AND WIT AND HIS
CONVERSATION WAS LACED WITH BITTERSWEET IRONY AT TIMES.
EXCEPT FOR A DISCOLORED (BLACK) SKIN AREA UNDER ONE
FINGERNAIL, THERE WAS NO OUTWARD SIGN OF BRUISES.4. MR. GILMAN ASKED HOW HE WAS BEING TREATED AND HOW HE
WAS FEELING. TIMERMAN REPLIED THAT A PRISONER IN HIS
CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD NOT ANSWER THAT KIND OF A QUESTION,
BUT HE WAS ALLRIGHT NOW -- WITH EMPHASIS ON THE "NOW". HE
WIND UP TO 67 OZ. LOST WEIGHT AND WAS MIXED DRUGS. HE DID
NOT APPEAR TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY UNDERWEIGHT, BUT IT ISPOSSIBLE THAT HE HAS BEEN GRAINING AGAIN IN RECENT WEEKS
AS A RESULT OF IMPROVED TREATMENT.5. TIMERMAN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHY HE WAS BEING HELD, AS
NO FORMAL CHARGES HAD BEEN LODGED AGAINST HIM. HE HAD NOT
BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THE MILITARY JUDGE'S INVESTIGATING
REPORT, WHICH WAS SECRET. FROM THE NATURE OF THE QUESTIONS
ASKED OF HIM, HOWEVER, THE MILITARY OFFICIAL'S HANDLING OF
THE INVESTIGATION WAS NO SOURCE OF COMFORT FOR HIM. THE
FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, ADMITTING THAT HE TOO HAD NOT
BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THE
PRELIMINARY JUDICIAL REPORT, STATED THAT ACCORDING TO
COMMON KNOWLEDGE MR. TIMERMAN WAS SUSPECTED OF "ECONOMIC
SUBVERSION" IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER AFFAIR.
THE OFFICIAL DOUBTED THAT TIMERMAN COULD BE GRANTED THE
RIGHT OF EXILE ABROAD AS HIS CASE WAS NOW
IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS. TIMERMAN SAID HIS INTERROGATORS
NEVER ONCE ASKED HIM ABOUT GRAIVER. INSTEAD, THE BULK
OF THE QUESTIONS HAD TO DO WITH A PRESUMED WORLD JEWISH
CONSPIRACY AGAINST ARGENTINA. HE WAS TOLD THAT SOVIET
PREMIER KOSYGIN WAS A JEW. HIS INTERROGATORS ASKED
WHAT HE KNEW ABOUT

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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6326

EXCISE

SECRET MEETINGS BETWEEN ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGGIN AND THE MONTOHEROS AND A SECRET PLAN OF "THE ELTERS OF ZION" (IN THE LAST CENTURY) TO TAKE OVER PATAGONIA ("PLAN ANDINA"). AT ONE TIMERMEN SAID HE ALMOST GIVE IN TO TEMPTATION TO PLAY ALONG WITH THE ANTISEMITIC PARANOIA OF HIS CAPTORS AND INVENT A STORY ABOUT SECRET MEETINGS OF THE "ELTERS OF ZION" IN ARGENTINA. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD ASKED HIS JAILER, A SIMPLE MAN, WHICH WAS THE EAST WALL OF HIS TINY PRISON CELL SO THAT HE COULD SAY HIS DAILY PRAYERS, BUT THIS INFORMATION LUDICROUSLY WAS DENIED ON SECURITY GROUNDS.

5. TIMERMEN WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EXPLAIN TO THE CONGRESSMAN THE GOVERNMENT'S NEED TO TAKE EXTRAORDINARY ACTION AGAINST TERRORIST SUEVERSION AND ASKED FOR THE CONGRESSMAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE SUEVITIVE THREAT FACING THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WHEN IT TOOK POWER. TIMERMEN SAID HE WAS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE VIDELA ADMINISTRATION AND HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO SUPPORT VIDELA. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS AT TIMES NAIVELY HAD APPROACHED THE ARGENTINE QUESTION AND RECALLED THAT HE HAD OFFERED LATE LAST YEAR TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE ABOUT THE TERRORIST CONNECTIONS OF GUSTAVO ROCA AND CARLOS MACEDA, WHOSE TESTIMONY FRASER HAD TAKEN EARLIER. SHAKING HIS HEAD SADLY, "THOSE WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN WHO WAS TRYING TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT," HE SAID.

7. TIMERMEN WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR MR. GILMAN'S EFFORT TO SEE HIM AND ALSO FOR MR. DERIANT'S INTEREST IN HIS WELFARE. GILMAN EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT JUSTICE WOULD BE DONE IN THE TIMERMEN CASE, IMPRESSING UPON THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL THAT TIMERMEN'S CAPTIVITY HAD EARNED ARGENTINA ENORMOUS NEGATIVE PUBLICITY HERETO. TIMERMEN WAS THEN ESCORTED WITHOUT HANDCUFFS TO A JEEP WAITING OUTSIDE AND DRIVEN AWAY.

8. COMMENT WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TIMERMEN MAY HAVE BEEN GIVEN SOME COACHING BEFORE THE MEETING, THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE. TIMERMEN DID NOT SAY ANYTHING WITH RESPECT TO U.S. POLICY AND THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE MODERATE VIDELA FORCES THAT HE HAD NOT SAID BEFORE PUBLICLY IN HIS OWN NEWSPAPER WHEN HE WAS A FREE MAN. GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVE IN ARRANGING THE INTERVIEW APPARENTLY WAS TO APPEAR TO BE RESPONSIVE TO A PRESUMABLY FRIENDLY U.S. CONGRESSMAN WHO OPPOSED SANCTIONS AGAINST ARGENTINA AND WHO PRESUMABLY WAS INFLUENTIAL IN AMERICAN JEWISH CIRCLES. ARGENTINES HAVE INORDINATE IDEAS OF INFLUENCE OF JEWISH THINKING ON U.S. DECISION-MAKING AND PURPOSE PRESUMABLY WAS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT TIMERMEN WAS IN REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH AND RECEIVING GOOD TREATMENT. NEVERTHELESS, AUTHORITIES APPEARED NERVOUS ABOUT RISK THEY MIGHT BE RUNNING. ALLEGEDLY MILITARY ALSO AVOIDED LEAVING HUGE PROPAGANDA SHOWCASE QUALITY TO THE EVENT. WE BELIEVE IT PREMATURE TO DRAW ANY CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE TIMERMEN CASE FROM THIS EVENT. END COMMENT.

9. EMBASSY ALSO HAS BEEN CONFIDENTIALLY TRANSMITTED A SERIES OF DOCUMENTS FROM NAVAL INTELLIGENCE SOURCES THAT WE ORIGINALLY WERE TOLD WOULD DEMONSTRATE THAT TIMERMEN HAD CONFESSIONED TO BEING A COMMUNIST AND SOVIET SPY. HOWEVER, THE DOCUMENTS WE HAVE INSTEAD INCLUDE CONCRETE PURPORTEDLY MADE BY THE POLICE

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